

for ridding Iraq of ballistic missiles and biological, chemical and nuclear weapons.

The behind-the-scenes campaign of caution is at odds with the Clinton administration's public position as the strongest proponent of unconditional access for the inspectors to any site in Iraq. Led by the United States, and backed by American threats of war, the U.N. Security Council has demanded repeatedly since 1991—most recently in Resolution 1154 on March 2—that Iraq give “immediate, unconditional and unrestricted” cooperation to the inspection teams. That last resolution, at U.S. insistence, promised “the severest consequences for Iraq” for further defiance and was voted under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, which is legal grounds for use of military force.

Last week, as Albright reportedly sought to rein in Butler, the administration was retreating from the vows it made six months ago to strike immediately and with significant military force if Iraq failed to honor a Feb. 23 agreement that resolved the last such crisis over inspections. At that time, administration spokesmen described a “snap back” policy of automatic military retaliation if Iraqi President Saddam Hussein violated his agreement with U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan.

Now the administration argues, as White House spokesman P.J. Crowley said yesterday, that Iraq is proposing “a cat-and-mouse game” and “we’re not going to play.” He said the United States would continue its “encouragement” of Iraq’s compliance with its obligations and would not allow economic sanctions to be lifted until it does so.

Albright, in a one-sentence statement issued through a spokesman, said last night: “U.S. policy has been to fully support UNSCOM in its inspections and I have never told Ambassador Butler how to do his job.” She said those speaking for her declined to answer further questions about her Aug. 4 “private discussions” with Butler and would not address specifically whether she had advised him to cancel the planned raids.

Butler, reached by telephone yesterday, said any suggestion that he received orders from Albright would be “a very considerable distortion of what took place.” He added, “No member of the [Security] Council, including the United States, has purported to give me instructions. They all recognize that their job is policy, my job is operations.”

Asked whether Albright urged him or advised him not to go forward, Butler said any answer “would be a very slippery slope” in which “I’d have to tell you what the Russian ambassador said, what the French ambassador said. Forgive me, but I won’t get into that.” Asked to confirm he spoke to Albright last week, he said, “I’m becoming concerned now about this line of inquiry.”

Beginning in June, according to knowledgeable officials, the U.N. inspectors developed secret plans—withheld from most members of their own staff—for surprise raids at two sites where they believed they would find evidence of forbidden chemical and biological weapons and the ballistic missiles capable of deploying them. The officials declined to describe the sites further, noting that they are still in operation.

In a little-known practice that all parties are loath to acknowledge, Butler dispatched senior lieutenants to London and Washington in late June to provide highly classified briefings on the intended inspection “targets,” the sources said. Formally, Butler reports equally to all members of the Security Council and does not give them advance operational plans. But one official said he understands “it’s suicide to go forward with an inspection like this” without informing his principal sponsors, the United States and Britain.

The two governments, according to knowledgeable officials, acknowledged to Butler’s deputies that UNSCOM had the right to make its own decisions. But they worked in concert in the weeks that followed to dissuade Butler from going forward with the inspection plan.

After consultations in Washington, Derek Plumbly, director of the British Foreign Office’s Middle East Command, flew to New York for a July 15 meeting with Butler. He told the Australian diplomat in no uncertain terms that the time was not ripe for a provocative challenge to Iraq, in part because Baghdad was still cooperating, ostensibly, on a “schedule of work” intended to resolve open questions, the sources said.

Shortly after that meeting, U.S. Ambassador Peter Burchill, the second-ranking delegate to the United Nations, called in Butler for a consultation in which he raised a long list of U.S. questions and concerns about the planned raids. Reading from prepared guidance, he told Butler the decision was UNSCOM’s but left the inspection chief with the plain understanding that the United States did not support his plan, according to a knowledgeable account of the meeting.

Butler canceled the raids in July but laid contingency plans to reschedule them this month after meetings on Aug. 3 and 4 in Baghdad with Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz. Aziz announced late on the first day that Iraq would answer no further questions about its forbidden weapons, asserting that all the answers had long since been made.

Butler had brought a senior inspection team led by Scott Ritter, who heads UNSCOM’s efforts to penetrate Iraqi counterintelligence efforts against the inspectors. Included on Ritter’s team, officials said, were language and computer experts, experts on import and export records, and scientists knowledgeable about missiles, chemical and biological weapons.

On Aug. 4, Butler notified the U.S. government that he had authorized Ritter’s team to conduct the raids on Aug. 6. That same day, he got word that Albright wished to speak with him and traveled to the U.S. Embassy in Bahrain for a secure discussion. Albright argued, according to knowledgeable accounts, that it would be a big mistake to proceed because the political stage had not been set in the Security Council.

Butler agreed to a three-day delay, to Aug. 9, in hopes that he could build broader support for UNSCOM during informal consultations with the Security Council. But after he briefed the council governments in New York, he got another high-level American call on Friday urging him to have the Ritter team stand down. The same day, he ordered them home.

In a letter to the council Wednesday, Butler said Iraq’s new restrictions “bring to a halt all of the disarmament activities” of his inspectors. On Tuesday, Mohamed Baradei, director general of the IAEA, sent a similar letter to the council saying he could no longer give confident assurance that Iraq is not attempting to reconstitute its nuclear weapons program.

Both men are awaiting further instruction from the Security Council, which is scheduled to take up the matter Tuesday. Yesterday in Baghdad, U.N. special envoy Prakash Shah said he conveyed a message from Annan that “Iraq should continue its cooperation” with the weapons inspectors. He announced no results from what he described as a “cordial” meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). The Chair would advise all

Members to address their comments to the Chair.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA).

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

I stand here today to say I wholeheartedly support the decision of our President and Commander in Chief to launch a series of air strikes against Iraq and that I support 100 percent the resolution we will be voting on shortly.

While it is a sad day, this action was necessary. It is an action that is justified. Every avenue has been exhausted to prevent this, but ultimately, it is action prompted by Saddam Hussein and his contempt for complying with the international rule of law.

Now the consequences for that disdain must be realized. In a closed door session in this House last night, all Members, Republicans and Democrats, met with Defense Secretary Cohen. I think any reservations with regard to timing were put to rest at that time. But if further questions linger, I should point out that important congressional and Senatorial voices of support are strongly behind the President’s actions. These voices include House Committee on International Relations member, the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN), incoming Senate Committee on Armed Services chairman, JOHN WARNER, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations chairman, JESSE HELMS, Senator DASCHLE and Senator RICHARD LUGAR, who said the attack came at exactly the right time, that any other decision would have severely damaged the credibility of our United States.

I wish to conclude by saying to our men and women in uniform, you have our undivided support. You represent our Nation’s finest. You defend not only our freedom but also the ideals of democracy across the globe. Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would remind all Members that they should not make reference to Senators’ comments.

Mr. SPENCE. Mr. Speaker I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. GILCHREST), a Vietnam veteran.

Mr. GILCHREST. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time.

I want to make two quick points on the floor this morning. The first point is that this is a representative body, based on constitutional provisions that provide for differences of opinion. The strength of this country is that we, as Representatives, critically analyze the decisions of other elected officials and even the President. So for us to discuss the issue of an invasion of Iraq is totally proper.

The other issue I want to bring up is that all of us, regardless of our party